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ABSTRACT

This article is based on the hypothesis that Reading Recovery teachers sometimes mistakenly reduce or withdraw their support once children have developed strategic processing capabilities and gained higher levels of text reading. It discusses structural characteristics of higher level texts and considers several types of processing demands represented by higher levels. It concludes with the following suggestions of ways teachers can support children in higher level reading: (1) foster simplicity in learning; (2) adopt different selection methods for higher texts; (3) continue to prepare students for meaning, language, and visual demands of new texts; (4) develop clear understanding of differences between word-level "work" and phrase/sentence-level processing; (5) understand the conditions for shifting to less supportive book introduction; and (6) understand necessary changes in support for higher level reading. Contains 25 references. (EF)

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Keeping the Processing Easy at Higher Levels of Text Reading

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In This Issue ...

Keeping the Processing Easy at Higher Levels of Text Reading . . 1
Moment of Discovery 5
It's All In How You Look at It 6
A New View of Writing 6
Editor's Corner 7
RRCNA Web Site 7
Copyright Notice 7
Editorial Board 7
Poetry
"Predictions of Progress" 5
The Interrogation 9
Side by Side 11
Ode to Jeffrey 11
Special Events 12
New Publications and Products 13
Annual Fund 13
Publications and Products 14
Membership Application 15
The Last Word 16
Home Input?
A Special Place
Appreciation
Slow(er) Articulation?

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Keeping the Processing Easy at Higher Levels of Text Reading

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"Instruction can manipulate the balance of challenge and familiarity to make the child's task easy or hard." —Clay, 1991, p. 288

Achieving a balance between keeping the learning-to-read task easy and providing enough challenge to continue children's development of a self-extending system is a major teaching issue in Reading Recovery lessons. In working with children at beginning levels of their programs, this dilemma of balancing ease with challenge is frequently easier to solve; however, as texts become more complicated and students achieve more competency, this "balancing act" becomes more intricate. How do Reading Recovery teachers continue to provide strong instructional support after children have achieved beginning levels of competency and are moving into higher text reading levels?

We have come to realize that the issue of instructional support at higher levels of text reading is critically important for students' successful discontinuing from Reading Recovery and maintaining the gains they achieved while in the program. We make a case here that independence is fostered by teaching throughout children's programs and that some of the most critical teaching and support must happen when children are reading in the upper levels of text. It is at those levels that children are developing a greater depth of visual processing which must continue to be integrated with their use of meaning and structure cues for their successful discontinuing and maintenance of gains.

From our observations of Reading Recovery lessons and our own tutoring of children, we acknowledge the feeling of urgency with which we teach in order to foster children's accelerative growth. However, too typically, it seems, once students are into upper levels of text reading (and for purposes of this article, let's say levels 10 and up), many teachers think that they should begin to withdraw their support from children's interactions with text. We have observed teachers withholding teaching support during familiar text reading, in book introductions, and during the first reading of the new book. Hence, text reading gets hard, lessons go over 30 minutes, reading becomes disfluent, and children who have been willing pupils begin to balk at reading the new book for their daily lessons. The learning-to-read task has become hard and unproductive.

Our hypothesis is that in our zeal to prepare children for the rigors of discontinuing assessment and successful performance with classroom literacy tasks, teachers mistakenly reduce and may even withdraw their support once children have developed some strategic processing capabilities and are into higher levels of text reading. In this article, we discuss the structural characteristics of higher level texts; we consider the several types of processing demands that higher levels represent; and, we conclude with a description of specific ways in which teachers can support children from mid-point to near the end of their programs.

Structural Characteristics of Higher Level Texts

Peterson (1991) describes the several

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Keeping the Processing Easy ...

continued from previous page

ways in which books get more difficult as reading levels increase. Some of the ways in which texts change relate to amount of picture support, sophistication in grammatical constructions, increased vocabulary and concept load, and more elaborated episodes and events. Of the several characteristics she describes, for our discussion here, we will focus on the increasingly more complex grammatical constructions—that is, more sophisticated structure—and how they pose very real challenges for emergent readers.

Because, " ... the young child's guesses at points of uncertainty in his reading tend to be dominated by his control over the syntax of his language" (Clay, 1982, p. 35), children who are moving into higher levels in their program have learned to use their own language as a source of prediction for "what will come next." One major aspect of the language structures of higher level texts is that they consist of more passages of literary language, that is, "book language," which differs greatly from children's natural language patterns and that, therefore, they will not be able to predict easily on the basis of their language knowledge. Consider these phrases and sentences from selected texts:

One major aspect of the language structures of higher level texts is that they consist of more passages of literary language, that is, "book language," which differs greatly from children's natural language patterns ... .

"Creep, creep under the log ... Scamper, scamper through the forest. ... " (Cowley, *The Terrible Tiger*, Level 12).

"'That Ratty Tatty is no good. I would catch her if I could ... ' But he couldn't so he didn't ... " (Cowley, *Ratty-Tatty*, Level 13).

"Along came a crab, a big blue crab ... " (Buckley, *The Greedy Gray Octopus*, Level 12).

"10 little garden snails by the old gray gate ... two climbed and saw the sun and then there were 8 ... " (Randell, *Ten Little Garden Snails*, Level 13).

"Honey for me/Honey for me/Honey for breakfast/And honey for tea ... " (Randell, *Honey for Baby Bear*, Level 9).

"Soon Sammy said, 'I want beans in a pot and toast that's hot. That's what I want for supper ... '" (Hollander, *Sammy's Supper*, Level 16).

Literary language, illustrated by the examples above, requires that readers possess an "ear" for unusual phrasing, for words in uncommon places but which make sense in the flow of the language, and oftentimes, the ability not only to hear rhyme but to use it as a source of prediction during reading.

Another general characteristic of texts at higher levels is more complex sentence structures. Children may see for the first time question sentences with verbs at the beginning. For example, in *Mushrooms for Dinner* (Randell, Level 16), Baby Bear asks, "Will you help me find some mushrooms?" and in, *The Cooking Pot* (Cowley, Level 10), the frequently repeated, "Is it cold? Is it hot?" may require children to apply word analysis to simple words that they have learned but which they have not seen in print in initial position in a sentence. These are examples of what Clay (1993) calls, "unexpected known words," and she states that, along with partially familiar words and unknown words, unexpected known words may require the ability, "... to take words apart, on the run, while reading ... " (p. 49).

Sentences at higher levels also become more descriptive with adjectives and/or adverbs between nouns and verbs. Here are some examples that illustrate more descriptive language, with what the child might be likely to predict instead of what is in the text:

Text: "Baby Bear went uphill and downhill looking for mushrooms ... " (Randell, *Mushrooms for Dinner*).

What the child may be expecting: Baby Bear went looking.

Text: "We ride in their big brown van ... " (Hoffman & Griffiths, *Visiting Grandma & Grandpa*, L. 11).

What the child may be expecting: We ride in their van.

Text: "Tyrannosaurus Rex looked at the three big horns, and he went thumping away ..." (Randell, *Brave Triceratops*, L. 12).

What the child may be expecting: Tyrannosaurus Rex looked at the horns, and he went away.

In these examples, the intervening words in what are predictable structures for first grade children pose unique instructional opportunities for teachers to assist children in using visual analysis to problem-solve constructions that are much more novel than what they typically write or use at this early age. But we don't want the reading to become a word-by-word analysis task either! Helping children use what they know about structure to get to novel ones is facilitated by thorough preparation for the new structures by allowing children to hear them prior to reading. (We will discuss and provide a rationale for teachers to continue to model and provide an aural rendition of novel structures in the final section of this article.)

Language support in upper level texts also signifies that structures are getting longer as children are introduced to compound and complex sentence constructions. Compound sentences contain two complete thoughts expressed by two (or more) subjects and verbs joined with a connector. The major challenge here is that children will know and have seen common connectors, like *and* or *but*, however, not in the function of joining two complete thoughts. In the following examples, we point out how compound sentences, which generally are longer, also increase the demands on children's reasoning skills:

"Tim and Michael and Anna were all good runners, but Tim was the best." (Hill, *The Cross-Country Race*, Level 14). In this example, the first part of the compound sentence has three subjects. To fully understand the second part, the reader must infer that, of the three children named, Tim was the best runner, information which is given only in the first part of the sentence and which must be connected to, "Tim was the best [best what?]."

"He thought it would be fun to join the big boys in their snowball fight, but he knew he wasn't old enough—not yet (Keats, *The Snowy Day*, Level 18). The first part of this compound sentence presents the subject and (simple) verb in the first two words, but another 13 words intervene before the second half of the sentence! And the second sentence gives qualifying information that explains why the boy can't

continued on next page

Keeping the Processing Easy ...

continued from previous page

join the others; that is, he is too young but will be old enough some day. Essentially, all of this "action" is taking place in the boy's mind (*he thought* and *he knew*); the events of the snowball fight and not being able to participate are necessary inferences the reader must make to fully understand the sentence.

Jessica and Daniel pushed and pushed, but the rain had made the sheep's wool very wet and heavy" (Randell, *The Waving Sheep*, Level 14). This example contains a double subject in the first part of the compound sentence, and a new subject (rain) and verb that provide information which has not yet been related to the first part of the sentence.

Another major, challenging new construction for children is the structure of complex sentences. These contain one or more dependent clauses and can pose different sorts of difficulties for children. Information in introductory clauses is removed from the subject and may not be remembered after subsequent problem-solving; many times, it provides conditional or temporal information about the action of the story and is less accessible as information that children can consolidate into overall meaning. Consider these examples:

When Karen walked into her room, some children began to laugh. (Randall, *Loose Laces*, level 17). The introductory phrase here provides temporal understanding of when the action of children laughing occurred.

"If you let me go, I'll never forget what you've done ... ." (*Fables from Aesop*, Level 18). The introductory phrase here provides information about the conditions under which the mouse will be grateful to the lion.

Dependent clauses in other positions within complex sentences usually provide additional detail that is secondary to subject/verb information. In these examples, dependent clauses provide rich, additional information to the main action of the sentence:

"Then Mr. and Mrs. Biggs and the two little Biggs drove away down the road in the little red camper for a vacation (Randell, *The Little Red Bus*, Level 13).

"She stayed as snug as a bug in a rug, with her coat to keep her warm" (Cowley, *The Tiny Woman's Coat*, Level 13).

The examples above related to types of dependent clauses illustrate how language becomes more tightly compacted in terms of the number of ideas expressed within a single sentence. Each represents a condensing of two or more units of information into one sentence; hence, children must learn to attend to several pieces of information being provided in single grammatical constructions (sentences). The five last cited examples are more condensed versions and therefore more efficient, constructions of the ideas listed in the figure (see below).

The many examples we have given in this section reflect how the nature of higher text levels poses new challenges for children in terms of new novel language constructions. However, children's access to the meaning of higher levels texts requires more inferential reasoning as well as more familiarity with ever more complex language structures. Indeed, the two go hand in hand: language becomes more efficient as more ideas are expressed with fewer words through more complex sentence construction. To attain meaning, children must learn how to "read between the lines" of the texts they are reading.

In the next section, we will consider other processing demands that higher levels of text represent to the developing reader.

Processing strategies at higher levels of text reading

We have just observed how higher text levels require more sophisticated levels of thinking for children to access meaning, and also how these advanced levels represent longer and more complex language structures. In effect, as children approach higher levels of texts, they require every bit as much support (if not more) from the teacher to access meaning and use structure cues as they needed at lower levels of text. Now, they must learn new ways of thinking about more implied relationships among ideas. In addition, they must learn how to suspend use of their own language as the primary source of prediction of text structure in order to integrate such attempts to predict with ever more sophisticated level of visual analysis. Going up levels means that the "ante" has been "upped" considerably.

Hence, higher level text reading poses new structural challenges and new meaning-based challenges. Now, let's look specifically at the visual processing demands at these higher level of texts.

Clearly, students must command a large number of the high frequency words that occur in the English language in order to read at higher levels. We have already

continued on next page

Figure: Examples of How Language Constructions and Meaning Become More Condensed

Text	Expressed Ideas
"When Karen walked into her room, some children began to laugh" (Randall, *Loose Laces*).	Karen walked into her room. Some children began to laugh.
"If you let me go, I'll never forget what you've done" (*Fables from Aesop*).	Please let me go. I will always remember that you did not eat me.
"Then Mr. and Mrs. Biggs and the two little Biggs drove away down the road in the little red camper for a vacation" (Randell, *The Little Red Bus*).	Then Mr. and Mrs. Biggs and their two children drove away. They went down the road. They went in their little red camper. They went for a vacation.
"She stayed as snug as a bug in a rug, with her coat to keep her warm" (Cowley, *The Tiny Woman's Coat*).	She was wearing a coat. The coat kept her warm. She stayed as snug as a bug in a rug.

Keeping the Processing Easy ...

continued from previous page

considered how familiar words in new places and new functions of familiar words can pose word analysis challenges for children. Teachers need to be sensitive to how "ordinary" words can fluctuate in position and function in text, thereby posing new learning challenges.

In addition, children face an increasing load of unusual, unpredictable, and frequently uniquely-spelled words. Words such as, "delicious," "excitedly," "speckled," "beautifully," "enormous," "knowing," "waddled," and "slither" pose these sorts of challenges for young readers. To "get to" these words through an integration of cues, they have to be learning more about word parts and spelling patterns.

... higher level text reading poses new structural challenges and new meaning-based challenges.

Our observations of Reading Recovery lessons indicate that teachers may be using primarily the reading portions of the lesson framework to teach about spelling patterns, word parts, or how to apply other forms of word analysis.

For instance, sometimes the flow of rereading familiar books is interrupted in order to point out visual similarities with known words, or the first reading of the new book is allowed to become a word-by-word, letter-to-sound analysis task in the name of providing enough "work." (We say more about appreciating the role of keeping it easy below). However, Clay (1993) says, with respect to teaching during the first reading, "Avoid too much questioning at this time because it disrupts the story" and, "the teacher should avoid unnecessary interruption of the flow of story reading" (p. 37).

Rather than over-relying on problem-solving during reading, we have come to appreciate how a tri-part approach for building word analysis skills is a powerful support for children at higher levels of text. This approach maintains a focus on how the activities being engaged in by students in the writing, and linking sound sequence to letter sequence (making & breaking), portions of the lesson are advancing to higher levels commensurate with the demands of reading higher reading levels. For instance, Clay (1993) tells us that the learning to be done during the writing activity, " ... is also about *constructing words from their parts*" (page 28, emphasis hers), in addition to being about the story composing process and creating messages to be read.

In making & breaking, students need to be beyond simple analogies and adding/substituting endings and beginnings. Clay (1993) asserts, "There is no end to the permutations of making and breaking *as the child becomes more proficient as a reader and writer* and his word knowledge increases ... . There are many intricacies of the English language that can be explored and discussed with the child" (p. 46, emphasis ours).

Thus, the learning to be done through writing stories and learning more about "how words work" (making & breaking) are important and complementary to students' being able to progress in word analysis, or being able to take words apart in reading. Indeed, the reading components of Reading Recovery lessons (reading familiar books, rereading the new book the next day, and the first reading of the new book) represent the opportunities we provide children to *apply* what they are learning about words, word parts, and spelling patterns during the writing and making & breaking components of lessons. (More detail about how writing, and making & breaking activities promote children's word analysis abilities for successfully reading higher levels of text is the subject for a whole other article!)

On the basis of the ideas we have considered thus far, we now will consider ways that teachers can support children's learning at higher levels of text in the reading portions of Reading Recovery lessons with regard to the cognitive and visual processing demands that higher text levels represent.

Teaching Implications: Working with students at higher levels of text reading

We propose several ways in which Reading Recovery teachers can help to keep the processing easy for students working at upper levels of their programs.

1. Appreciate the role of "keeping things easy" in learning. Contrast the model of learning to read by children before they enter school—they did not learn because it was made hard for them. If you as a reader of this article can confidently and successfully play golf, use the computer, do complicated needlepoint or any other complex activity—someone at some time probably made it easy for you to accomplish the component skills involved. If you are saying, "No, I don't enjoy golfing, computing" ... or ?, is it because it was never made easy for you?

Learning how to read should never be hard; too much is at stake. (It's one thing not to be a golfer or needlepointer—quite another to be a nonreader!) Perhaps we have confused the idea of "reading work" with "hard work." The interesting thing we have come to notice in Reading Recovery lessons is that if we make it hard, the young child becomes discouraged and learning seems to drop off; however, when we make it easy, the same child seems to accelerate his own learning and she learns more. While this whole notion of making it easy to learn seems to fly in the face of the kind of respect for work that has influenced our culture, Clay (1993) reminds us in her discussion about acceleration that, "Acceleration depends upon how well the teacher selects the clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish a new response, skill, principle or procedure" (p. 8, emphasis ours).

2. Think differently about book selection by adopting a new way of looking at higher texts from that used when selecting lower texts. When selecting upper level texts for the new book component of lessons, we need to look for implicit meanings and connections, and watch for constructions that will be new and unusual to children in terms of how they typically speak and write as first graders. Clay (1993) reminds us to select the reading book very carefully, taking meaning and language (structure) into account. "Then from the possible texts select one that is well within the child's control ... . There should be a minimum of new things to learn if the teaching goal is the integration of all these aspects of the task" (p. 36). The principles for text selection should be employed at higher levels of text as much

continued on page 8

Keeping the Processing Easy ...

continued from page 4

as for the first texts we choose for our students; at the same time, however, we need to identify the new kinds of challenges that children will meet at higher levels.

3. Continue to provide book introductions that thoroughly prepare students for the meaning, language, and visual demands of new texts. In preparing an introduction to the story, we must be sure to provide the child with the whole meaning by taking into consideration implied meanings and associations that may be difficult for the child to grasp during the first reading. "As the child approaches a new text he is entitled to an introduction so that when he reads, the gist of the whole or partly revealed story can provide some guide for a fluent reading" (Clay, 1991a, p. 335).

We would like to make a strong case for continuing to let children hear and, as appropriate, repeat key structures that may be totally new to them.

Clay (1991a) tells us that if we think this is being too helpful to the reader, we might consider what happens during a conversation between two people. In order for understanding to occur between two people, the speaker either checks or keys into the prior knowledge of the listener, or the speaker provides an introduction so that the listener can understand where the speaker "is coming from." We have a responsibility to provide a clear meaning of the whole story—not just page by page meanings—in order for our beginning readers to have the schema necessary to make sense of the print.

In addition, as meaning in upper level text reading becomes a matter of more inferential reasoning, our book introductions and teaching during the first reading may need to include making links in the text that are not directly stated. For instance, in an example we cited above, the text reads, "Tim and Michael and Anna were all good runners, but Tim was the best" (Hill, *The Cross Country Race*). Here, the teacher could point out that Tim was the best runner of all of them—he was really fast! This can serve as modeling about how to make intertextual inferences.

We believe book introductions at higher levels of text reading also must continue to prepare children for the type of structures that they will meet. We have discussed the kinds of novel structures of upper levels and how length of sentences, more compact ideas, and compound and complex structures pose unique challenges to children at the same time that they are attempting to integrate a more sophisticated level of visual processing into a self-extending system of learning on text.

We would like to make a strong case for continuing to let children hear and, as appropriate, repeat key structures that may be totally new to them. Clay appears to have this in mind when she asserts, "When the child is moving into *higher-level texts* offer him many things to stimulate various approaches to print. Pay particular attention to what you think would have the greatest payoff. This might be ... a *training in predicting what structures come next* ... ." (Clay, 1993, p. 15, emphases ours). In this excerpt, Clay is specifically addressing the extra support that early readers require for reading at higher levels. She describes what we might do as "training" the child so that prediction of novel structures will be enhanced. The word 'training' signifies to us that the teacher may spend time letting the child hear and say the unusual structures in new texts in the interest of assuring successful and easy reading of them.

Finally, supportive book introductions provide children with the schema they need in order to make predictions about unknown words which they will encounter more and more in upper levels of text reading. "Prediction in this sense does not mean predicting the word that will occur; it means the prior elimination of unlikely alternatives ... . Such a procedure is efficient, it is supported in part by understanding what is being read, and it is strongly supported by the reader's knowledge of the syntactic alternatives and restrictions of the language" (Clay, 1991, p. 336).

For these many reasons, we strongly urge that Reading Recovery teachers continue to provide structure and meaning during book introductions throughout children's programs to assure, "that the child has in his head the ideas and the language he needs to produce when prompted in sequence by print cues" (Clay, 1993, p. 37).

4. Develop a clear understanding of the difference between word-level "work" and phrase/sentence-level processing. As mentioned above, one of the scenes we often see during Reading Recovery lessons at higher levels of text is children reading slowly, doing word-by-word problem-solving on many words. They manage to "read" all the words, but there is little fluent reading, and completing a whole book in the allotted time becomes very unlikely. The question we want to ask ourselves is, "Do we really want children to problem-solve word-by-word, or do we want the language to flow as easily as possible so that the "ear" for language children need to acquire can be learned?"

Here again, the teacher's orientation to a story at these higher levels can greatly influence whether children are able to process quickly on the run or whether they need to drop down to word-by-word processing. Clay (1991b) states that introductions are, "useful when it is important for children to read a new text with a high degree of successful processing" (p. 265). We maintain that for Reading Recovery children, that is always the case!

If teachers provide both rich meaning and some of the structures that may be novel for children based on their current experiences with texts, the processing most likely will be successful and the first reading of the book will be fluent, rendering further meaning upon which children may draw to figure out new words. Clay (1993) directs us to, "Give opportunities for the child to hear and use the new words and structures which he will have to work out from the pictures, the print and the language context. (*Sometimes it is necessary for a child to gain control over a particular language structure first, so that he can use it in his reading.*)" (p. 37, emphasis ours).

What we want to make clear is that teaching children to problem-solve unknown words *is* necessary, but requir-

continued on next page

Keeping the Processing Easy ...

continued from previous page

ing them to do great amounts of it without the appropriate support of meaning and having the grammatical structures in their heads appears to be counterproductive to acceleration.

5. Understand when and how to shift from providing a thorough book introduction to occasionally asking children to look at the pictures and tell us about the story before reading it. The practice of shifting to less supportive book introductions is done under very specific conditions: "With a child who is using cues appropriately from all areas, and is on the way to independence ...." (Clay, 1993, p. 37). In other words, this is not for children who are still learning how to integrate information from various sources.

The most common problems around this issue are: (a) asking children to make a shift to reading a new text "with minimum help" (Clay, 1993, p. 37) as early as levels 6, 7, or 8, before they are well on their way to independence; and, (b) over-use of "minimum introductions" and assistance on books which require more supportive introductions. Sometimes, teachers may be afraid that children will not be ready to discontinue if they do not shift to what they call "minimum book introductions" on a regular basis. (A careful reading of page 37 of the Guidebook will show that Clay does not use that term!). We have found the opposite to be true: Children who receive little or no support prior to reading many higher level texts seem to deteriorate in their ability to problem solve on the run. They become word-by-word readers at levels 10 and above, when once they were quite fluent and confident.

Clay (1993) suggests that when the child provides his own orientation to the story, some other support (such as the teacher pointing at the words) will be needed during the first reading. We would like you to consider, also, the following ideas about implementing the approach of giving less orientation for reading new books.

In Reading Recovery lessons, the new book is selected at what the teacher expects is the child's *instructional reading level* (90-94% accuracy). By definition, an instructional text reading level means that the new book needs to be accompanied with *instruction* from the teacher. When considering a text that will require minimum orientation and help from the teacher, teachers may want to drop a level or two in order to carefully select a book that is on the child's *independent reading level*, that is, one on which she is likely to operate independently and successfully. In other words, the story has minimal challenges and are ones that the child can get to on her own.

Sometimes using another version of a story the child has read, such as *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, or *The Little Red Hen*, is a good choice because the child already has an understanding of the story's meaning, as well as some of the structures she will encounter. Another way to select a book upon which the child is likely to operate well is to find a text that has very supportive pictures and language that is easy for young children to understand. Books like *Rosie at the Zoo* (Cowley, Level 10) have been easily accessible to some children.

Furthermore, teachers need not use books for which only minimum assistance is necessary for weeks and weeks. Nor do they need to introduce less supportive introductions at each reading level throughout the program. Getting children "ready" for the specific tasks of discontinuing assessment and the rigors of classroom work can be the focus of the final two weeks of children's programs; it need not be a focus of how we are working instructionally with children throughout their programs! Rather, let us appreciate how providing strong, appropriate scaffolding throughout children's programs provides the best overall preparation for the level of independence required for discontinuing and for classroom demands.

6. Understand how the nature of teaching support during the first reading needs to change for children at higher levels of text reading. Because children are having to learn more

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Keeping the Processing Easy ...

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about visual analysis with text containing difficult-to-predict structures and more unfamiliar and unusual words, the teacher's role becomes one of "holding" meaning and structure as children do the "dipping down" to word analysis as needed for visual problem-solving. Teachers can "hold" meaning for children during the first reading by commenting to meaning as the child turns the page (without interrupting the flow of the reading). In this way, the teacher makes links across the story as a model of the thinking the child needs to learn how to do.

For example, in the book, *The Flood* (Giles, Level 14), a neighbor, Andy McDonald, comes to rescue the flood victims. On page 12, the text says, "'It's Andy McDonald,' said Dad. 'Thanks for coming, Andy.'" As Richard turned the page, the teacher said, "I wonder what Andy will say and do to help the family." This comment helped Richard think about the fact that Andy would be talking and doing something to help. The child read the next page quite fluently:

"You can't stay here," said Andy.

"Get your things and come to our place."

They all climbed into the boat and went slowly away past the treetops.

During the orientation to the story, the teacher had used the phrase, "past the treetops," and she talked about how high the water was getting, in order to assure Richard had in his head the language and meaning he needed to understand that the flood waters were so high that the boat was almost at the level of the tops of the trees.

Another way we supply structure to assist in problem-solving during the first reading of the new book occurs when the teacher rereads from the beginning of the page and/or line in order to reestablish the "feed-forward" function of meaning and structure that are lost when children stop to work at the word level. An example of this occurred when Alyssa was having trouble with the word 'hungry' in the text, *Pepper's Adventure* (Rigby PM, Level 14). Because the forward momentum of the reading had been broken for problem-solving 'cage' and then for 'hungry,' the teacher reread the previous sentence and a half in order to reestablish meaning, stopping at the difficult word which Alyssa was then able to solve:

Sarah put some food in the cage.

"Pepper will be hungry," she said.

A high level of support during the first reading such as in this example enables children to learn how to integrate on-going meaning and structure cues with higher levels of visual analysis. Such support on the part of the teacher will fade out as children acquire greater flexibility with more complex structures and more sophisticated word analysis.

Some closing thoughts

Teacher decisions about how much support to provide an individual child reading a specific book is always idiosyncratic and dependent upon what the child can do. However, as we have stated, Reading Recovery lessons at higher levels of text reading sometimes become very difficult for both teachers and children. Reading Recovery *will* involve high levels of effort on the part of both teacher and child, but lessons should never be hard.

We want you to consider, further, that Reading Recovery lessons should be fun for both teachers and children. We can ensure that our children and we will have fun if we make a concerted effort to "keep it easy to learn" by being generous in using appropriate, strong support at higher levels of text reading. Perhaps we can do this more readily if we think of everyday in Reading Recovery as the child's birthday: the more we give in the way of "gifts" (like meaning and structure during the book orientation), the more she will give us in the way of problem-solving on the run, integrating all cueing sources effectively and efficiently.

As Reading Recovery teachers, we truly are decision-makers whose work with children consists of managing, "the balance of challenge and familiarity" across the full scope of their programs—including higher levels of text—to make their task of learning to read ***easy***.

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